NOT TO BE TAKEN
FROM THE LIBRARY

378.744
BO
AM 1928
cop. 1

Low Library
Holidays

Boston University
College of Liberal Arts
Library

THE GIFT OF the author

July, 1929

378.744
BO
AM 1928
COO
copy 1

Ideal
Double Reversible
Manuscript Cover
PATENTED NOV. 15, 1898
Manufactured by
Adams, Cushing & Foster

28-6½

-p 5358

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE PLACE OF PHILIP FRENEAU IN THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT

Submitted by

Lowell William Coolidge

(A. B., Boston, 1927)

In partial fulfilment of requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

1928

———oOo———

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
LIBRARY

Frances, Philip, 1932-1932 Cito.

Series

July 1929

p5358

upstairs
378.744
BO
AM 1928
Coo
copy 1

OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION. 1

PART I

ROMANTIC ELEMENTS IN FRENEAU'S WORK

General Characteristics 5

The Subjective. 6

The Picturesque 8

The Reactionary Spirit. 13

Nature Poetry 18

Poems of the Sea. 30

The American Indian 33

PART II

FRENEAU'S EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIP TO THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT

Sources and Literary Background 40

Classical Training. 40

English Influence 43

French Influence. 49

Contributions and Influence 53

In England. 54

In America. 60

Summary. 67

Bibliography . . . . . i-iv

INTRODUCTION

The position of Philip Freneau constitutes something of a crux in the history of early American literature. That he was an active man of affairs, a quite prominent figure during the American Revolution and the years of political controversy which followed it, a prolific and versatile writer,- these facts are apparent from even the most superficial examination of his life and works. As to his permanent significance, however, especially from a literary point of view, there is by no means a general agreement.

The prevailing attitude toward him, up to a few years ago at least, has been one of almost complete neglect. Barrett Wendell's view is, on the whole, typical. In his Literary History of America, Wendell devotes but five pages to a discussion of Freneau's work, while the most that he is able to say of his importance is that "in one or two of his poems, it now seems probable, we can find more literary merit than in any other work produced in America before the nineteenth century."[1] One of the most recent investigators in the early American field, Professor Vernon Louis Parrington, seeks to explain this attitude on political grounds. "Freneau's place in American letters," Professor Parrington writes, "was fixed

---

[1] P. 130.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2014

https://archive.org/details/theplaceofphilip00cool

by a Federalist verdict, and he has since remained obscure and neglected by all, save an occasional historian who dips into a few poems, regrets that the smell of revolution is so rank, and dismisses him with the comment that Campbell and Scott did him the honor to appropriate a figure of speech without acknowledgment .... In consequence the literary critics have echoed the political critics, and given new life to the old partisanship."[1]

A few critics, however, have taken a quite different attitude from that which Professor Parrington deplores. As early as 1897 Tyler asserted the importance of Freneau in the following glowing terms. "Even in the larger relations which an American poet in the eighteenth century might hold to the development of English poetry everywhere, Freneau did some work, both early and late, so fresh, so original, so unhackneyed, so defiant of the traditions that then hampered and deadened English verse, so delightful in its fearless appropriation of common things for the divine service of poetry as to entitle him to be called a pioneer of the new poetic age that was then breaking upon the world, and therefore to be classed with Cowper, Burns, Wordsworth, and their mighty comrades."[2] This identification of Freneau with the Romantic Movement has been sporadically suggested by various writers ever since. Professor Pattee, in an essay published in 1922, says of the first

---

[1] The Colonial Mind, p. 370.

Moses Coit Tyler, The Literary History of the American Revolution, II, 274.

collected edition of Freneau's poems, "Had this early volume been an English book, it long ago would have figured largely in the histories of the romantic and naturalistic movement which resulted in the outburst of song that has marked our present century. That Freneau was a pioneer in the dim, romantic world that was to be explored by Coleridge and Poe no one may doubt who reads his 'House of Night'; that he was a pioneer in the movement that succeeded in throwing off the chain forged by Pope is evident from even a cursory examination of his editions."[1]

To some it appears that Freneau's admirers have implied rather more than they have proved. Professor Cairns indeed goes so far as to assert that the reawakening of interest in Freneau's work has "led to absurd over-praise."[2] At any rate, it seems clear that his status is still largely problematical. His political activities have been investigated with a very considerable degree of thoroughness by Dr. S. E. Forman,[3] but of his non-political work there is no adequate published investigation. The extent of his frequently-suggested affiliations with the Romantic Movement remains an open question. The present study is undertaken, not in the

---

[1]Fred Lewis Pattee, Side-Lights on American Literature, p. 286.

[2]William B. Cairns, A History of American Literature, p. 145.

[3]The Political Activities of Philip Freneau, Johns Hopkins Studies in Historical and Political Science, Series XX, no. 9-10.

expectation of completely answering the question but in the hope of throwing some small amount of light upon it.

My method of approach has been fundamentally inductive. By an examination of all of Freneau's available writings I have endeavored to determine the essentially Romantic elements that they contain. I have then attempted to relate these elements to the movement as a whole, with a view in the first place to causes and in the second place to effects. Beginning with an analytical study of the poet's work, I have tried to discover the influences underlying that work and then the reacting influences which that work in turn exerted upon the general course of nineteenth century Romanticism.

ROMANTIC ELEMENTS IN FRENEAU'S WORK

General Characteristics

The term Romanticism is used to describe such a multitude of tendencies that a specific and at the same time adequate definition of it is a practical impossibility. In a discussion, however, of some of the more famous attempts (notably those of Heine, Madame de Staël, Victor Hugo, Musset, Pater, and Saintsbury), Professor William Lyon Phelps points out certain common and fundamental elements. "Romantic literature," he says, "will generally be found to show three qualities: Subjectivity, Love of the Picturesque, and a Reactionary Spirit. By the first quality I mean that the aspiration and vague longing of the writer will be manifest in his literary production; by the second, that element of Strangeness added to beauty, which Mr. Pater declares is fundamental; ... and by the third is meant that the Romantic Movement in any country will always be reactionary to what has immediately preceded."[1] These qualities are admittedly suggestive rather than definitive. Taken as absolute criteria they are perhaps inadequate; but they will serve, I believe, as a fairly sound basis for a preliminary discussion of the romantic aspects in Freneau's work.

---

[1] The Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement, p. 4.

The Subjective. The subjective note makes itself distinctly heard in one of Freneau's earliest poems, "The Power of Fancy" (1770). This piece of work is obviously not original. Mr. H. Clark[1] has pointed out parallels between it and an "Ode to Fancy" written in 1746 by Joseph Warton, and other scarcely less distinct parallels might be shown in the case of a half-dozen or more poems which had appeared in England about the middle of the century. Whether Freneau borrowed from any of these or whether he went back to the common source of them all, the "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" of Milton, it is impossible to determine. Probably he did both. Yet despite the imitative element, "The Power of Fancy" is extremely significant in its revelation of the young poet's state of mind. He is here expressing his devotion to a poetic ideal and in his emphasis upon the imagination rather than the intellect he is definitely breaking from the eighteenth century convention. Even though the form and to a large extent the imagery are not his own, he is nevertheless voicing his own aspiration.

> "Fancy, to thy power I owe
> Half my happiness below;
> .....
> Come, O come - perceived by none
> You and I will walk alone."[2]

---

[1] Studies in Philology, XXII, 8-10.

[2] Reprint of 1786 Edition, p. 21. (For the sake of brevity, the respective Freneau editions will be indicated only by dates; full titles are given in the Bibliography. In all cases, page references are to the original editions with the exception of that of 1786, for which I have substituted the 1861 reprint by J. R. Smith.)

This worship of Fancy, a pronounced characteristic of the romantic precursors, appears more than once in his early work. In stanza 5 of "The House of Night", for example, he sounds the same note.

> "Fancy, I own thy power - when sunk in sleep
> Thou play'st thy wild delusive part so well
> You lift me into immortality,
> Depict new heavens, or draw the scenes of hell."[1]

It is less prominent in his later work but it does not entirely disappear. In the edition published in 1795 there is included a set of verses entitled "Fancy's Ramble"[2] which presents in a more original if less effective manner the same idea which underlies the earlier poem.

The "Il Penseroso" mood is dominant in "The Power of Fancy", and in general it is the dominant mood throughout Freneau's whole poetic career. Here again he is in line with the romantic tendency, for the characteristic trend of emotional romanticism, especially in its earlier stages, was one of melancholy,- a melancholy both intense and personal. It creeps into his work again and again, even when ostensibly he is writing from an objective point of view. Perhaps as good an illustration of this as any is afforded in the poem "Plato, the Philosopher, to his Friend Theon." In this the

---

[1]Reprint of 1786 Edition, p. 89.
[2]Edition of 1795, p. 372.

speaker is supposedly Plato, but the spirit of such a stanza as the following is clearly a reflection of Freneau's own cast of thought.

"Give me the stars, give me the skies,
Give me the heaven's remotest sphere,
Above these gloomy scenes to rise
Of desolation and despair."[1]

The "aspiration and vague longing" of which Professor Phelps speaks is unmistakably there, a longing which is no less significant because it was never poetically fulfilled.

The Picturesque. The picturesque element in Freneau's work is decidedly prominent. It is most clearly seen in "The House of Night", but in a lesser degree it runs through many of his other works. There is an obvious striving for it in the following stanza from "Female Frailty" (November, 1775), an early poem - and, on the whole, a highly artificial one.

"What a picture have I seen!-
What can all these visions mean!-
Winter groves and empty halls,
Coffins wrapt in velvet palls,
Monuments and funerals;
Forms terrific to the sight,
Weeping phantoms clad in white,
Streams that ever seem'd to freeze
Planted round with cypress trees
Ever drooping - never green -
What a vision have I seen!"[2]

---

[1]Edition of 1795, p. 372.
[2]Reprint of 1786 Edition, p. 79.

There is nothing particularly effective about these lines. Indeed they are little more than a rehashing of the familiar graveyard imagery, but they indicate a tendency in which Freneau was interested at an early date.

In "The Pictures of Columbus", published in 1788, he develops this tendency with some degree of power. "Picture II - The Cell of an Inchantress" is especially significant. Its inspiration may possibly have been the witches' scene in Macbeth: both the general conception and metrical form would seem indeed to indicate this influence. Quite likely also it owes something to Gray's "Descent of Odin" (1768), for the parallelism between the two pieces is fairly close. But at the same time the work contains a strongly original element, and in its weirdly grotesque imagery I think surpasses Gray. The following speech of the Inchantress is a good illustration.

"The staring owl her note has sung;
With gaping snakes my cave is hung;
Of maiden hair my bed is made,
Two winding sheets above it laid;
With bones of men my shelves are pil'd,
And toads are for my supper boil'd;
Three ghosts attend to fill my cup,
And four to serve my pottage up;
The crow is waiting to say grace:-
Would'st thou in such a dismal place
The secrets of thy fortune trace?"[1]

Incidentally this poem displays another romantic characteristic. It goes back to the Middle Ages for its subject

---

[1]Edition of 1788, p. 3.

matter and gives an historical figure a highly imaginative coloring. In regard to this, Freneau left a rather naive footnote. "The fifteenth century was," he says, "like many of the preceding, an age of superstition, credulity, and ignorance. When this circumstance therefore is brought into view, the mixture of truth and fiction will not appear altogether absurd or unnatural. At any rate, it has ever been tolerated in this species of poetry."[1]

In 1815, when he published another piece of the same general type, "Pythona: or the Prophetess of Endor",[2] he evidently did not feel constrained to make any such half-apology. "Pythona", however, offers a far more curious mixture than the earlier work. "The Pictures of Columbus" is consistent in its tone, but "Pythona" brings together a confused jumble of the weird and the ludicrous. One would suspect that he was here secretly laughing at his subject, were it not for the fact that he does much the same thing in works where his purpose is obviously serious. Even in "The House of Night" he injected more than one stanza that is artistically undesirable (e. g. 56). Perhaps the explanation is to be found in the fact that he was trying to get away from the pseudo-classic principle of decorum. If that was his aim, he decidedly over-compensated.

---

[1]Edition of 1788, p. 3.
[2]Edition of 1815, Vol. II, p. 158.

Despite such defects, however, "The House of Night" is unquestionably a strong piece of writing, probably about the best that Freneau ever did. Certainly it shows his love of the picturesque in its most fully developed form. When one reads for the first time such a stanza as 105,

> "Lights in the air like burning stars were hurl'd,
> Dogs howl'd, heaven muttered, and the tempest blew,
> The red half-moon peep'd from behind a cloud
> As if in dread the amazing scene to view."[1]

he is inclined to agree with Professor Pattee's estimate that "one may search in vain in the English poetry of the early romantic movement for anything that can equal it in strength of conception and in sustained mastery over the vaguely terrible."[2]

At the same time, I doubt if the work is the highly original achievement that Professor Pattee and some others would have us believe. Not only in the general conception but in specific lines and phrases there is evidence that Freneau borrowed freely. In a prefixed "Advertisement" he states: "This poem is founded upon the authority of Scripture, inasmuch as these sacred books assert that the last enemy that shall be conquered is Death."[3] Its immediate connection with the Bible, however, seems to be limited to this sole idea. A

---

[1]Reprint of 1786 Edition, p. 104.
[2]Side-Lights on American Literature, p. 275.
[3]Reprint of 1786 Edition, p. 88.

possible explanation of his assertion of a Scriptural basis lies in the example of Milton, and the probability of this explanation is indicated by certain very obvious parallels between the poem and Paradise Lost. A full consideration of this point would be outside the scope of the present study, but it may not be amiss to make one or two suggestions.

Stanza III is to the purpose.

> "And from within the howls of Death I heard,
> Cursing the dismal night that gave him birth,
> Damning his ancient sire, and mother sin,
> Who at the gates of hell, accursed, brought
> him forth."[1]

That this is based on the allegory of Sin and Death developed at length in Book II of Paradise Lost (more especially in lines 760-789) is self-evident. The whole idea of course goes back to James I: 15, but the specification of "the gates of hell" as well as other details not mentioned in that passage show that it was Milton's elaboration that Freneau was working from. The description of Death -

> "Sad was his countenance, if we can call
> That countenance, where only bones were seen," etc.[2]

is peculiarly Miltonic. The resemblance to Paradise Lost, II, 666-667 is obvious:

---

[1]Reprint of 1786 Edition, p. 105.
[2]Ibid, p. 93.

"That other shape,
If shape it might be call'd, that shape had none."

And the fury of the tropic storm (at which Mr. Paul Elmer More has marvelled[1]) is very closely paralleled in Paradise Regained, IV, 409-425.

These similarities - which might be easily augmented - are sufficient, I think, to indicate that the poem is far from being original. But Freneau's skill in adapting his borrowings entitle him to a very considerable measure of credit, while his interest in the supernatural shows him in line with a definite romantic tendency. "The House of Night" belongs in spirit to that class of poetry which is best exemplified by the "Ancient Mariner" of Coleridge.

The Reactionary Spirit. The third quality of Romantic literature which Professor Phelps mentions is probably the most fundamental of all. Romanticism was first and foremost a reaction against neo-classicism. In France it tended to be all that was not Voltaire; in England and America it tended to be all that was not Pope. This tendency made itself apparent in two ways: in content and in form. Freneau's reaction from the viewpoint of content has already been touched upon to some extent. In so far as he emphasized the subjective, the intense, the personal, the imaginative; in so far

---

[1] Shelburne Essays: Fifth Series, p. 92.

as he sought to portray the picturesque, the strange, the unique he was in line with the Romantic Movement in literature. In so far also as he identified himself with liberalism in politics and religion, with humanitarianism and idealism, he allied himself with concomitant factors in that movement. All of these points will be more fully considered in the following sections; for the present we will consider only the element of form.

Most of the manuals of American literature (if they discuss the matter at all) convey the impression that Freneau's characteristic form is the heroic couplet, and that his use of any other type of verse constitutes an exception. Precisely the reverse of this is true. The heroic couplet is fairly prominent in his first collective edition and his longest single poem, "The British Prison Ship", is written in that form; but of the 46 poems in the 1788 edition only four are in heroic couplets and in the two volumes published in 1815 the form is so rare as to be practically negligible. From the viewpoint of verse mechanics most of his work shows unquestionably a complete break from the eighteenth century convention.

Octosyllabics - either in couplets or stanzaic arrangement - were apparently Freneau's favorite, but he also used a number of other forms. The 1788 edition shows the greatest proportional variety. In this edition the octosyllabic

couplet occurs eleven times, and the octosyllabic stanza fifteen times in the following combinations: a b a b c c, a a b c c b, a a a b b c c, a b a b c d c d. There are also several combinations of decasyllabic lines, mostly irregular but with two distinct stanzaic arrangements: a b a b c c and a a b a b b a b. Anapestic tetrameter appears three times, blank verse twice, and the sonnet once.

This sonnet, "The Insolvent's Release"[1] is the only one that I have been able to find in any of his editions, and it must be confessed that this is rather poorly done. The third quatrain and concluding couplet conform to the Shakespearian type, but the first two quatrains are decidedly irregular - a b c a c b d d. The blank verse, on the other hand, is very good, and makes one regret that he used it so sparingly. Passages like the following from "The Hermit of Saba" show an evident familiarity with such a master of the form as Shakespeare or Marlowe.

> "Perdition on these fiends from Europe,
> Whose bloody malice, or whose thirst for gold
> Fresh from the slaughter house of innocence
> Unpeoples isles, and lays the world in ruin!"[2]

"The Fiddler's Farewell" illustrates Freneau's use of a lighter verse form.

---

[1] Edition of 1788, p. 38.
[2] Ibid, p. 162.

"To fiddle at frolics I find is in vain;
No creature alive will attend to my strain,
And I and my dog must be trudging again;
The strings of the fiddle
Are broke in the middle
Excepting the bass which I never could bear,
And to make a new purchase I've nothing to spare."[1]

The alliteration and the insertion of an initial iambic foot to break the monotony of the anapests are worthy of notice. So also is the breaking of the fourth line at the caesura. This latter device be frequently used, sometimes with very good effect. It is seen at its best, together with an interweaving of tetrameter and trimeter lines, in "The Northern Soldier."[2]

In his later work Freneau grew more careless of his versification. He tended to use feminine rhymes to excess, as, for example, in the stanzas "On the Capture of the Guerriere."

"Isaac did so maul and rake her
That the decks of Captain Dacres
Were in such a woful pickle
As if death with scythe and sickle
With his sling, or with his shaft,
Had cut his harvest fore and aft."[3]

He also showed a remarkable penchant for the three-line stanza of (supposedly) identical rhyme; all too frequently

---

[1]Edition of 1788, p. 38.
[2]Poems Relating to the American Revolution, p. 179.
[3]Edition of 1815, Vol. II, p. 40

the rhymes are false. Stanza 2 of the verses "To a Night-Fly" is not an unfair example of what he was capable at his worst.

> "O Fly! I bid you have a care:
> You do not heed the danger near;
> This light, to you a blazing star."[1]

His whole work, however, is not to be judged by these last two examples, for they constitute the exception rather than the rule. Many of these later defects are probably to be at least partly explained by his attempting to produce a greater variety of metrical effects. In any event, the faults are those which appear at times in many a poet of greater fame than he.

In discussing Freneau's style Mr. De Lancey writes: "His verse is wonderful for its ease, simplicity, command of language, and delicacy of handling. Except Dryden and Byron no poet of America or England has shown himself a greater master of English or of rhyme. The luxuriance of his stanzas is something amazing."[2] Mr. De Lancey's luxuriance (here as elsewhere) is perhaps equally amazing, and his comparison with Dryden and Byron is incongruous to say the least. But his enthusiasm is not wholly unwarranted. In

---

[1]Edition of 1815, Vol. I, p. 75.
[2]Edward F. De Lancey, Philip Freneau, the Huguenot Patriot-Poet of the Revolution. Quoted in Austin, Philip Freneau, the Poet of the Revolution, p. 222.

the matter of expression, Freneau went a long way toward a complete emancipation from the restricting conventions of neo-classicism.

Nature Poetry

From a quantitative standpoint, a search for nature poems in the various Freneau editions yields no very satisfactory results. Scattered passages of nature description are fairly common, but distinct units coming under this head are comparatively few. Several of these, moreover, are of the purely conventional pastoral type,- imitations or direct translations from classical sources. Such are "Female Frailty" (1775),[1] "The Distrest Shepherdess" (1775),[2] "The Misfortunes of March",[3] "Philander and Lavinia"[4]. Another translation, though of a different kind, is that of Ariosto's "Description of the Gardens in Alcina's Inchanted Island."[5] This last is perhaps rather significant in that it shows Freneau's interest in romantic scenery, but it is after all only a translation.

Omitting these translations and pastoral imitations, and also for the present the scattered passages in the satires and sea ballads, we are reduced to the following list.

---

[1]Reprint of 1786 Edition, p. 77.
[2]Edition of 1788, p. 166.
[3]Ibid., p. 179.
[4]Ibid., p. 182.
[5]Ibid., p. 41.

1. Retirement
2. The Vernal Ague
3. Beauties of Santa Cruz
4. A Moral Thought
5. The Man of Ninety
6. May to April
7. The Wild Honey-Suckle
8. To a Night-Fly
9. On the Uniformity and Perfection of Nature
10. The Brook of the Valley
11. To a Caty-Did
12. On Finding a Terrapin in the Woods

Of these the first four were published in the edition of 1786, the next three in the edition of 1788, and the rest in the edition of 1815. Several were published earlier in periodicals, and some in slightly altered form were included in the edition of 1795.

This list may be somewhat arbitrary. Two or three of the selections included might equally well be placed under another head; possibly some have been omitted that should be included. I am convinced, however, that the list if not complete is at least thoroughly representative. Drawn from the early and late editions of Freneau's work, these selections cover the entire period of his poetic activity. An analysis of them should afford a fair basis for estimating his place among the nature poets of the Romantic Revival.

"Retirement" is one of the best known and most praised of Freneau's works. Tyler observes that in this "little poem called 'Retirement', written probably a year or two after Wordsworth was born, one catches tones that anticipate the

poetic and spiritual traits of that mighty maker and master of the new era of English song."[1] To a certain extent this is probably true; in its simplicity and relative freedom from artificial diction it is quite Wordsworthian. But in its central conception and especially in its attitude toward nature it is typical of the eighteenth century. The idea that modest means and a comfortable solitude are to be preferred to wealth and power has always been a favorite one with poets and essayists, and it was a particular favorite of the neo-classicists. Men whose fortunes were broken by the Civil War seized upon it with avidity, and the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century writings are full of it. James Beattie, in fact, brought out in 1758 a piece of verse bearing this very title. The natural beauties that Freneau is here extolling are beauties, moreover, that have an unmistakably human finish. Regularity, order, nature well under control are all indicated.

"A cottage I could call my own
Remote from domes of care;
A little garden walled with stone,
The wall with ivy overgrown,
A limpid fountain near."[2]

---

[1]Moses Coit Tyler, The Literary History of the American Revolution, Vol. I, p. 182.

[2]Reprint of 1786 Edition, p. 52.

This is a picture of rusticity, but it is an urbane rusticity - the sort in which the man of the eighteenth century delighted. There is nothing, finally, in Freneau's temperament that would indicate that he is writing here with any degree of personal feeling. Retirement in 1770 was precisely what he did not want. For my part, I can see little in the poem other than a reechoing of a conventional conception.

In "The Vernal Ague" (about 1775), although it is decidedly inferior to the preceding work, there is something a bit more characteristic of the romantic mood. The poet is turning to nature as a refuge, and he is seeking that refuge in her gloomier aspects.

> "Where the blackbird roosts at night,
> In groves of half distinguished light,
> Where the evening breezes sigh,
> Solitary, there stay I."[1]

The closing lines are addressed to nature personified, and contain a suggestion of something pretty close to worship.

> "Great guardian of our feeble kind
> Restoring Nature, lend thine aid,
> And o'er the features of the mind
> Renew these colours that must fade,
> When vernal suns forbear to roll
> And endless winter chills the soul."[2]

---

[1]Reprint of 1786 Edition, p. 76.
[2]Ibid., p. 76.

The descriptive details found in "The Vernal Ague" unquestionably have an imitative ring. In "The Beauties of Santa Cruz" (1776) the conventional element is far less prominent. For what it lacks in imaginative coloring it makes up in photographic vividness. Freneau is here writing with his eye steadily on the object and without dressing up his natural scenery with too many man-made embellishments. Particularly effective is the picture of the tropical storm in stanzas 82-84.

> "Wild were the skies, affrighted nature groan'd
> As though approached her last decisive day,
> Skies blaz'd around, and bellowing winds had nigh
> Dislodged these cliffs, and torn yon hills away.
>
> .....
>
> "Low hung the gloom, distended with the gale
> The clouds dark brooding wing'd their
> circling flight,
> Tremendous thunders join'd the hurricane,
> Daughter of chaos, and eternal night."[1]

Freneau evidently still felt constrained to use personification and his conscious striving for effect is all too patent. At the same time the treatment is based on first hand observation, and in its emphasis on the wilder and freer forms of nature it is definitely romantic.

"A Moral Thought", although not commented upon by any of Freneau's admirers and included in none of the anthologies, in my opinion comes about as close to the romantic attitude

---

[1]Reprint of 1786 Edition, p. 128.

toward nature as anything that he wrote. It is a little lyric of four quatrains, placed in the 1786 edition with a certain unconscious irony between two vicious satires on Cornwallis. Both of these satires are dated 1781, and, as a general chronological sequence was observed by the publisher in his arrangement, we may infer that this was its date of composition. The last two stanzas contain the whole substance of the poem.

"So nightly on the flowing tide
Oft have I seen a raree-show;
Reflected stars on either side,
And glittering moons were seen below,

But when the tide had ebb'd away,
The scene fantastic with it fled,
A bank of mud around me lay,
And sea-weed on the river's bed."[1]

Here is a perfectly simple and common observation of a natural phenomenon, recorded in everyday language, and through the imaginative turn of the writer's mind given a moral significance. It would be extremely difficult to find anything written at that time which more closely meets the requirements set forth by Wordsworth nearly twenty years later in his preface to the Lyrical Ballads. In its use of nature as a symbol of life, in its stark simplicity of expression, in its melancholy tone and pensive moralizing it is deeply suggestive of the Wordsworthian type of Romanticism.

---

[1]Reprint of 1786 Edition, p. 196.

"The Man of Ninety" (or "A Visit to the Oak", as it is also entitled) exhibits in a much less effective way the same characteristics. There is the typical romantic parallel between humanity and external nature expressed in the old man's words to the tree.

> "When vernal suns began to glow,
> You felt returning vigour flow,
> Which once a year new leaves supply'd;
> Like you, fine days I wish'd to see,
> And May was a sweet month to me,
> But when November came - I sighed!"[1]

The mood of autumnal melancholy, which Professor Babbitt has pointed out was a favorite of the Rousseauist,[2] runs through the whole piece and is definitely expressed in the last line quoted. Incidentally, the final stanza introduces the floral decorations of the grave-yard school: "withered flowers", "Christmas greens", "gloomy pines"

> "And cedars dark, and barren vines,
> Point out the lonely tomb."[3]

"May to April" comes near to being a pure nature lyric, rather reminiscent of Herrick and the Cavalier group of a century and a half earlier. If it exhibits no definitely and exclusively romantic characteristics, it nevertheless

---

[1]Edition of 1788, p. 65.
[2]Irving Babbitt, Rousseau and Romanticism, p. 299.
[3]Ibid., p. 66.

marks a reaction to the prevailing eighteenth century type. There is a certain freshness and artless simplicity in such lines as the following that place them in the same general class as the songs of Burns and his followers.

"Without your showers
I breed no flowers,
Each field a barren waste appears;
If you don't weep
My blossoms sleep.
They take such pleasure in your tears."[1]

"The Wild Honey-Suckle" (1786) belongs even more clearly to this class. Mr. Norman Foerster has called it "the first memorable poem of nature in American literature,"[2] and there is much justice in his criticism. The poem contains all the elements pointed out in "The Moral Thought" with the addition of a closer localization and something in the way of a sensuous appeal. The latter element is not strong, but in such phrases as "this silent, dull retreat" and "soft waters murmuring by"[3] we get a suggestion at least of sound and motion. This is about as close as Freneau ever came to the sensuous; his work as a whole shows little of that delight in color and form which most of the romantic school exhibit. The element of localization is more marked, and is perhaps the chief factor lying back of Mr. Foerster's comment.

---

[1]Edition of 1788, p. 78.
[2]American Poetry and Prose, p. 1009.
[3]Edition of 1788, p. 152.

American poetry up to this time had ignored the actual landscape and had gone to the Babylonian willow, the eglantine, the yew, and the like for its subjects. Freneau had localized his setting in "The Beauties of Santa Cruz"; here he takes a common flower from the North American landscape. This sort of localization was a feature emphasized by Wordsworth, and its appearance marked an important aspect of the work of the pre-romanticists, as Miss Reynolds has pointed out.[1] Classical poetry almost invariably belonged to no particular spot.

The general neo-classical attitude appears in Freneau's lines "On the Uniformity and Perfection of Nature", which were written sometime after 1797.

> "On one fix'd point all nature moves,
> Nor deviates from the track she loves;
> Her system, drawn from reason's source,
> She scorns to change her wonted course.
> . . . . . .
> No imperfection can be found
> In all that is, above, around,-
> All, nature made, in reason's sight
> Is order all, and all is right."[2]

This is nothing but cold reason, and is typically eighteenth-century. In its affirmation of the immutability of natural law it is undoubtedly connected with the liberalism that was replacing the old theology, but its connection with the romantic movement in belles-lettres is certainly very indirect.

---

[1]Myra Reynolds, The Treatment of Nature in English Poetry between Pope and Wordsworth, p. 256.

[2]Edition of 1815, Vol. I, p. 94.

The same point of view is reflected in the somewhat longer poem "On the Universality and Other Attributes of the God of Nature"[1] and again in that "On the Religion of Nature."[2] Freneau professes to see God in nature, but it is always as the Architect, Artificer, Lawgiver, never as a vital Being with whom man is in direct personal correspondence. This latter conception which is the essence of Wordsworth's religion - and, in a lesser degree, that of most of the Romanticists - he in no way foreshadows.

A philosophical rather than poetic outlook upon nature seems to dominate the last two volumes of Freneau's work. To this generalization, however, we are forced to make an exception in the case of four poems: "To a Night-Fly Approaching a Candle"[3], "To a Caty-Did"[4], "On Finding a Terrapin in the Woods"[5], and "The Brook of the Valley"[6].

The first of these is spoiled by its utterly wretched versification, but the other three are as good intrinsically as any of the nature poems that Freneau wrote. That they have been scarcely commented upon by his admirers is without doubt largely due to the fact that they illustrate few

---

[1]Edition of 1815, Vol. I, p. 105.
[2]Ibid., Vol. II, p. 34.
[3]Ibid., Vol. I, p. 99.
[4]Ibid., Vol. I, p. 75.
[5]Ibid., Vol. II, p. 138.
[6]Ibid., Vol. II, p. 81.

characteristics that he had not already exhibited. Another motive may possibly have entered in,- hesitancy to acknowledge his apparent indebtedness to an English contemporary. Mr. De Lancey insists that "not a trace of Moore, Southey, Campbell, Rogers, Scott, Wordsworth, or Byron is to be found in the last two volumes of his [Frenau's] poems which he gave to the world in 1815."[1] Of the one man whom De Lancey neglects to mention, however, there seems to be a rather distinct trace. The titles and subject-matter of the verses "To a Night-Fly," "To a Caty-Did," and "On Finding a Terrapin in the Woods" certainly suggest Robert Burns. That Freneau had read some of Burns' work we know definitely from a bit of evidence that these same volumes afford. The poem entitled "The Volunteers' March" and dated July, 1814 is a patent imitation of the famous "Scots Wha Hae". Freneau saved himself from the charge of plagiarism only by appending to the poem the following note:

"This little ode, with the addition of two new stanzas, is somewhat altered from one of Robert Burns' compositions, and applied to an American occasion: the original being Bruce's supposed address to his army, a little before the battle of Bannockbourne."[2]

---

[1]Edward F. De Lancey, Philip Freneau, the Huguenot Patriot-Poet of the Revolution. Quoted in Austin, Philip Freneau, the Poet of the Revolution, p. 221.

[2]Edition of 1815, Vol. II, p. 43.

This of course does not prove anything in connection with the nature poems in question, but it certainly lends weight to the internal evidence of the poems themselves. Whether due to any influence or not, Freneau's attitude toward his subject as well as his general treatment is here very close to that of Burns.

"The Brook of the Valley", however, is apparently written without imitation, and shows the same characteristics that have been already pointed out in the "Moral Thought" and the "Wild Honey-Suckle". The opening lines have a clear ring of sincerity.

> "The world has wrangled half an age,
> And we again in war engage,
> While this sweet, sequester'd rill
> Murmurs through the valley still."[1]

And the final parallel that he draws between the brook and man is something more, I think, than the conventional moral. Consciously or not there is in it an autobiographical touch, a projection of Freneau's own personality.

> "Emblem, thou, of restless man;
> What a sketch of nature's plan;
> Now at peace and now at war,
> Now you murmur, now you roar!
>
> Muddy now, and limpid next,
> Now with icy shackles vext -
> What a likeness here we find!
> What a picture of mankind!"

---

[1]Edition of 1815, Vol. II, p. 81.

Poems of the Sea

Until the nineteenth century the ocean did not occupy a very important place in English poetry. Especially was this true during the neo-classical period. To the neo-classicist the ocean was a dreary waste and nothing more; "when the poet had once said that it was big and awful his stock of impressions was exhausted."[1] It was only with Byron and Shelley that we find a fully developed expression of man's love for the sea, its message and its call. But during the latter half of the eighteenth century there appeared in the work of three or four men a growing appreciation of the ocean as a domain for poetic treatment, and one of these men was Freneau.

The opening stanza of "Captain Jones's Invitation" (ab. 1777) is expressive of this new attitude.

> "Thou, who on some dark mountain's brow
> Hast toiled thy life away till now,
> And often from that rugged steep
> Beheld the vast extended deep,
> Come from the forest, and with me
> Learn what it is to go to sea."[2]

In "The Departure" (1785) we get an effective picture of the sea on a calm summer evening.

---

[1]Myra Reynolds, The Treatment of Nature in English Poetry between Pope and Wordsworth, p. 256.

[2]Reprint of 1786 Edition, p. 149.

"Sunk is the sun from yonder hill,
The noisy day is past;
The breeze decays, and all is still,
As all shall be at last;
The murmuring on the distant shore
The dying wave is all I hear,
The yellow fields now disappear,
No painted butterflies are near,
And laughing folly plagues no more."[1]

Here is a perfect setting for the favorite romantic mood of quiet melancholy, and Freneau proceeds to develop the mood in a more or less conventional manner. The fact that he chose such a background, however, is significant. The serenity of a summer sea is preferable to that of a graveyard.

An utter contrast to "The Departure" is afforded in the "Verses Made at Sea, in a Heavy Gale". The helplessness of the laboring ship in the grip of the storm is brought out with a fairly marked degree of vividness. The idea is more in accord with the prevailing eighteenth-century attitude, but the descriptive power of the piece makes it worthy of notice. A rather impressive figure is employed in the final stanza.

"The barque, accustom'd to obey,
No more the trembling pilots guide,
Alone she gropes her trackless way,
While mountains burst on either side."[2]

---

[1]Edition of 1788, p. 163.
[2]Reprint of 1786 Edition, p. 323.

Freneau wrote several other bits of lyric and descriptive verse with a distinct ocean flavor,- notably "The Hurricane", "Hatteras", "Stanzas Written at the Foot of Monte Souffriere", "Stanzas Written at the Island of Madeira", and "On the Peak of Teneriffe." Equally important perhaps is the group of poems in which he makes use of the sea as a background for narrative treatment. The pieces comprising this group are by no means of equal merit. Most of them center about the events of the American Revolution and the War of 1812, and their satiric purpose is often all too apparent. Yet considering the fact that they represent a type that was practically non-existant in English literature at the time, and that this type was afterwards considerably developed by Campbell and others, they do not seem wholly insignificant. Forgetting the satire, it is possible to see in them elements of real worth.

Those in particular which deal with the Revolution often have a remarkable vividness of description and rapidity of action. We see these qualities in such lines as the following from the "Stanzas on the Death of Captain Nicholas Biddle" (ab. 1776).

> "Shock after shock torments my ear;
> And lo! two hostile ships appear,
> Red lightnings round them glow:
> The Yarmouth boasts of sixty-four,
> The Randolph thirty-two - no more -
> And will she fight the foe!"[1]

---

[1]Reprint of 1786 Edition, p. 147.

Canto I of "The British Prison Ship", which recounts the launching of a vessel, the beginning of its voyage, its flight from a British frigate, and its final capture, shows a narrative vigor that almost atones for its deficiencies of form. Probably the best of the lot is "On the Memorable Victory of Paul Jones" (1781)[1]. Over this latter poem Professor Pattee becomes highly enthusiastic. "In dash and fire," he says, "in ability to catch and reproduce the odors and the atmosphere of the ocean, in enthusiasm and excitement that is contagious and that plunges the reader at once into the heart of the action, and in glowing patriotism that makes the poems national hymns, no American poet has excelled this earliest singer of the American ocean."[2]

The American Indian

A peculiar form of interest in the Indian was a fairly prominent if minor aspect of the Romantic Movement. Stimulated by the back-to-nature philosophy of Rousseau with its Noble Savage corollary, it found expression in the Natchez of Chateaubriand and in a score of less ambitious works. In America, where enchantment was not lent by distance, the

---

[1]Reprint of 1786 Edition, p. 184.
[2]Side-Lights on American Literature, p. 280.

idea never took hold very firmly, although in Cooper's fanciful creations traces of it are clearly evident. To a certain extent, Cooper's romantic treatment was anticipated by Freneau.

The latter's interest in the Indian appeared fairly early. We see it first in his ambitious epic on "The Rising Glory of America" (1771) which contains a section described in the Argument as "a philosophical enquiry into the origin of the savages of America."[1] But as the description suggests his interest at that date was historical rather than poetic, and his treatment proves to be decidedly unromantic.

In "The Prophecy of King Tammany" (ab. 1782) a quite different note is struck. Here we have a picture of

> "The Indian chief, who, fam'd of yore,
> Saw Europe's sons advent'ring here,
> Look'd sorrowing to the crowded shore,
> And sighing dropt a tear!
> He saw them half his world explore,
> He saw them draw the shining blade,
> He saw their hostile ranks display'd,
> And cannons blazing through that shade
> Where only peace was known before."[2]

The chief goes on to foretell the woe that shall befall the invaders as a punishment for the suffering that they have brought upon the Indian, then calmly mounts a blazing funeral pyre, and dies with a smile of triumph. It would be hard to conceive of anything much more absurd,- and also more clearly

---

[1]Reprint of 1786 Edition.
[2]Ibid., p. 273.

expressive of the characteristic romantic attitude toward this subject.

"The Dying Indian, or Last Words of Shalum" (1784) does not go quite so far in the direction of absurdity. Shalum, to be sure, is an extremely philosophical savage, but he is probably more true to life than Tammany. The weird imagination that entered into the Indian's concept of the future life is rather vividly expressed in the following lines.

> "Relentless demons urge me to that shore
> On whose black forests all the dead are cast;
> Ye solemn train, prepare the funeral song,
> For I must go to shades below,
> Where all is strange, and all is new;
> Companion to the airy throng,
> What solitary streams,
> In dull and dreary dreams,
> All melancholy, must I rove along."[1]

A third poem on the death theme, "The Death-Song of a Cherokee Indian," has, through its supposed plagiarism by a British writer, gained much more notoriety than the two preceding pieces. This work, which appeared in Carey's American Museum January 1, 1787 over Freneau's name, was afterwards included in Chambers's Cyclopaedia of English Literature and there attributed to "a retired but highly accomplished lady, sister of Sir Everard Howe, and wife of John Hunter, the celebrated surgeon."[2] Her poems had been collected and

---

[1]Reprint of 1786 Edition, p. 309.
[2]Vol. II, p. 279. Cited in Duyckinck, Cyclopaedia of American Literature, p. 355.

published in 1806. Duyckinck hit upon this apparent theft and discussed it at some length in his Cyclopaedia of American Literature, whereupon Tyler took it up and made it a text for a diatribe on "oblique transmarine tributes."[1] As a matter of fact, however, Freneau's authorship of the poem is highly questionable. It appeared in none of the collected works published during his lifetime and Professor Pattee has been unable to discover any earlier newspaper appearance. Since almost all of Freneau's poems at this time had their initial appearance in newspapers and since they were sedulously collected by the author for his later editions, its authenticity seems very doubtful. A point which to me seems to argue against Freneau's authorship is found in the versification. The piece is written in a dancing anapestic meter, a form which Freneau rarely used and which is obviously unsuited to the theme. Freneau was not always an artist in form and in his later work he was capable of almost any absurdity. But I know of no other work of his at this period in which propriety is so utterly disregarded. The whole question would be hardly worth notice were it not for the fact that Duyckinck and Tyler made so much of the alleged plagiarism. All of the

---

[1]Moses Coit Tyler, Literary History of the American Revolution, p. 179.

text-books which mention the matter reecho these two men's view.

Two other selections, "The Indian Student" and "The Indian Burying Ground" complete the list of Freneau's poems on the Noble Red Man. The first of these, published in the Pennsylvania Packet June 9, 1787 and included in the 1788 edition, is a pure glorification of the State of Nature. It describes the sending of a young Indian lad to Harvard College where the learned professors strive to transform him from his native innocence into a lawyer, physician, or divine. But

> "The shady bank, the purling stream,
> The woody wild his heart possess'd;
> The dewy lawn his morning dream
> In Fancy's gayest colours dress'd."

He bitterly bemoans his departure from the simple beauties of the woods.

> "A little could my wants supply -
> Can wealth and honour give me more;
> Or, will the sylvan god deny
> The humble treat he gave before?
>
> Let Seraphs reach the bright abode,
> And heaven's sublimest mansions see -
> I only bow to Nature's God -
> The land of Shades will do for me."[1]

And so he exchanges the scholar's gown for a blanket and returns "to the western springs".

---

[1]Edition of 1788, p. 71.

"The Indian Burying Ground", also published in the 1788 edition,[1] is without question the best known of the poems belonging to this group. Beers terms it "not the least interesting among the progeny of Gray's 'Elegy',"[2] but its connection with Gray is rather indirect. Here, if ever, Freneau was original in his treatment. This is one poem among his works which Barrett Wendell considered worthy of distinct commendation. "In the genuineness and simplicity of these verses," Wendell writes, "there is true beauty. In the opening thought, that it were better for the alert dead to sit than to lie drowsing ... there is something really imaginative. And in the pensive melancholy with which Freneau records the rock-tracings of the vanished natives of America, there is likeness to the motive of a poem which twelve years before Freneau died permanently enriched English literature. This is John Keats's 'Ode to a Grecian Urn', published in 1820." But, Wendell concludes, "the comparison between Freneau's 'Indian Burying Ground' and Keats's 'Grecian Urn' is worth our attention only because both poets had a similar motive. Freneau expressed it simply, directly, and even beautifully; Keats expressed it immortally."[3]

---

[1]Edition of 1788, p. 188. Original title: "Lines Occasioned by a Visit to an Old Indian Burying Ground."

[2]Henry A. Beers, A History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century, p. 177.

[3]Literary History of America, p. 134.

Personally, I do not think that "The Indian Burying Ground" is by any means the best of Freneau's works. But the judgment that Wendell applies to it may be applied with equal force elsewhere. At his best, Freneau is good; he is never great. Placed beside the work of the great Romantics the finest of his poems seems dull and colorless; our only reason for comparing them is, as Wendell says, because they and he had a common motive. But the fact that Freneau possessed that motive is, after all, a great deal. Considered in relation to his time and his literary environment, he takes on more than a passing significance.

FRENEAU'S EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIP TO THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT

Sources and Literary Background

Classical Training. Freneau's romanticism, like that of the more prominent figures in the movement, grew out of classicism. His early training was classical in both the broad and narrow senses of the term. At the age of ten he was placed under the tutorship of the Rev. William Tennant of Monmouth, from whom he learned the rudiments of Latin and Greek. Four years later he was enrolled at the Penolopen Latin School conducted by the Rev. Alexander Mitchell, where he remained for two years. In 1768, at the age of sixteen, he entered Nassau Hall, Princeton. The nature of the undergraduate work at Princeton in those days can be inferred from President Witherspoon's "Address to the Inhabitants of Jamaica" published at Philadelphia in 1772.

"In the first year they read Latin and Greek, with the Roman and Grecian antiquities, and Rhetoric. In the second, continuing the study of the languages, they learn a compleat system of Geography, with the use of the globes, the first principles of Philosophy, and the elements of mathematical knowledge. The third, though the languages are not wholly omitted, is chiefly employed in Mathematics and Natural Philosophy. And the senior year is employed in reading the higher classics, proceding in the Mathematics and Natural

Philosophy and going through a course of Moral Philosophy."[1] This diet could hardly be expected to foster a romantic imagination, but there is no evidence that Freneau rebelled against it. At any rate he was duly graduated, his name occurring on the commencement program as a participant in a learned debate on the question "Does Ancient Poetry Excel the Modern?"[2] Significantly enough he upheld the ancients.

The influence of this classical background never wholly left him. We see it not only in such early work as "The Pyramids of Egypt," "The Monument of Phaon," and "The Prayer of Orpheus" (all written about 1770), but also in the imitations and direct translations that run through his later editions. In the edition of 1809, the next to the last which he brought out, occurs a translation of the third Elegy of the first book of Ovid's Tristia and an extended passage from Lucretius describing the great fire at Athens. Two odes of Horace are translated in the 1788 edition (Lib. I, Ode 15, and Lib. II, Ode 16), while the ubiquitous pastorals have already been mentioned.[3] Francis in the Cyclopaedia of American Literature observes that "it is remarkable how tenaciously

---

[1]Cited by Pattee, Poems of Philip Freneau, Introduction, Vol. I, pp. xix-xx.

[2]John MacLean, History of the College of New Jersey, Vol. I, p. 312, note. Freneau was apparently absent at the exercises, but his arguments were read.

[3]See p. 21.

Freneau preserved the acquisitions of his early classical studies, notwithstanding he had for many years, in the after portion of his life, been occupied in pursuits so entirely alien to books."[1]

But while he held to these acquisitions tenaciously enough, on at least two occasions he writes as if he had no great respect for them. It is the romanticist in theory at least who delivers himself of the following observation in "The Advice to Authors."

"Be particularly careful to avoid all connection with doctors of law and divinity, masters of arts, professors of colleges, and in general all those that wear square black caps. A mere scholar and an original author are two animals as different from each other as a fresh and salt water sailor."[2]

In "The Indian Student" there is an equally suggestive comparison - this time between "the woody wild" with its "purling stream", and Harvard College.

> "Where learned men talk heathen Greek
> And Hebrew lore is gabbled o'er,
> To please the Muses, twice a week."[3]

The antithesis of "mere scholar" and "original author" seems in a way prophetic of Emerson. But Freneau never

---

[1]Duyckinck, Cyclopaedia of American Literature, p. 354.
[2]Edition of 1788, p. 44.
[3]Ibid, p. 69.

attempted, either in theory or practice, to free American letters from foreign models. British writers, he observes in the same "Advice to Authors", are "excusable in treating the American authors as inferiors; a political and a literary independence of their nation being two very different things - the first was accomplished in about seven years, the latter will not be accomplished in as many centuries."[1]

English Influence. He himself owed the greatest of his literary debts to England. If the curriculum at Princeton had no place for the writers of modern times, he succeeded in reading them outside. And in this reading we find his preparation following the same course as that of the early British romanticists. In a set of verses "On the Folly of Writing Poetry"[2] written in 1785, he mentions a list of English poets whom he considers great. Pope, naturally enough, is one; the others are Milton, Shakespeare, Spenser, and Chaucer. This list is extremely suggestive.

Whether Chaucer was actually much more than a name to Freneau is somewhat questionable. The "Journey from Philadelphia to New York by the Late Mr. Robert Slender"[3], however, at once calls to mind The Canterbury Tales. Canto I,

---

[1]Edition of 1788, p. 44.
[2]Ibid., p. 38.
[3]Ibid., p. 409.

in particular, which is entitled the "Character of the Travellers" is sufficiently close in design to Chaucer's "Prologue" to make one believe that Freneau had it in mind when writing. A canto on "Debates" and another on "Vexations and Disasters", moreover, are analogous in a general way at least to certain of the events which took place on the Canterbury road. A final consideration is the verse form. The piece is written in irregular tetrameters, predominantly anaepestic - a meter which is not particularly common. Now if Chaucer's "Prologue" is read (as it was at that time) without regard to the final -e, this is precisely the metrical effect produced. These various factors taken together seem rather significant, although of course they may be pure coincidences.

In the case of Spenser the lines of connection are rather more definite. The Shepherd's Calendar in all probability had a considerable influence on Freneau's pastorals. A specific instance of this is to be found in the opening lines of "The Beauties of Santa Cruz."

> "Sick of the northern glooms, come, shepherd, seek
> More equal climes, and a serener sky:
> Why shouldst thou toil amid the frozen ground,
> Where half year's snows, a barren prospect be."[1]

---

[1]Reprint of 1786 Edition, p. 117.

The parallel to Hobbinoll's advice to Colin in the June Eclogue is close enough to indicate almost certain imitation.[1] A more general but no less obvious influence is to be found in some of the imagery of "The House of Night." The following lines taken almost at random will sufficiently indicate my meaning.

> "Mist sate upon the woods, and darkness rode
> In her black chariot, with a wild career" (l. 31-32)
>
> " ... pale phantoms - Rage to Madness vext,
> Wan, wasting grief, and ever-musing care,
> Distressful pain, and poverty perplext." (l. 106-108)

The Faerie Queene is full of this sort of pictorial extravagance and constant personification.

Possible Shakespearean influence has already been suggested in the case of "The Pictures of Columbus"[2] and a passage from "The Hermit of Saba" quoted as an example of Freneau's use of blank verse.[3] The setting and form of the latter poem vaguely suggests The Tempest. The scene is on an island distant in time and place, and the dialogue has a marine flavor close to the opening passages of that play. But Freneau was not a dramatist either in fact or in spirit, and his indebtedness to Shakespeare was for the most part only of a general sort.[4]

---

[1] Cambridge Edition of Spenser, p. 29.
[2] See p. 10.
[3] P. 18.
[4] While Freneau is not to be thought of as a dramatist, it is interesting to note that he attempted and very probably completed a full-length play. This was written about 1780 and was based on the treason of Arnold and the trial of André. It was

(Cont. on next page)

His connections with Milton were undoubtedly much closer. "Il Penseroso" was the ultimate and probably the direct source of "The Power of Fancy", as has already been pointed out.[1] I have also indicated my belief that Paradise Lost had a strong influence in the conception of "The House of Night."[2] These two poems offer the most in the way of direct parallels, but a more general Miltonic influence is apparent in a far larger number of his works. His use of octosyllabics goes back to the minor verse of Milton, as does his love of a comfortable meditative melancholy. In these latter characteristics, of course, Freneau was but following the trend of the Romantic Precursors on the other side of the Atlantic; he was at one with the Warton brothers, Collins, Mason, Hamilton, Gray, and a score of lesser lights. How many of these men's works he actually knew, or to what extent he borrowed from them the elements we have been discussing, it is possible only to conjecture. He was at least familiar enough with the romantic undercurrent of eighteenth-century poetry to be stimulated to turn back to the sources from which it came.

(Footnote continued)
never published but at least one fragment of the MS. is extant. The form is blank verse showing a considerable degree of flexibility. (See Victor H. Paltsits, A Bibliography of Philip Freneau, p. 39).

[1] p. 7.

[2] Pp. ~~14~~-15. 12-13

In the case of a few of the more outstanding figures there is evidence of specific indebtedness. Freneau was obviously acquainted with Gray; indeed the "Elegy" is written all over such lines as the following from "The Deserted Farm-House".

> "This antique dome the unmouldering tooth of time
> Now level with the dust has almost laid;-
> Yet ere 'tis gone, I fix my humble rhyme
> On these low ruins, that his years have made."[1]

The title "Deserted Farm-House" suggests immediately Goldsmith's "Deserted Village", and there are several indications that with that author's work he had rather more than a passing acquaintance.[2] The observation on originality already cited, while in itself quite original so far as America was concerned, probably goes back to The Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning.[3] Indeed the critical ideas developed in the "Advice to Authors" show in general a striking similarity to those which Goldsmith had advanced. "The Voyage of Timberoo-Tabo-Eode, an Otaheite Indian" seems to me to have probably had its inspiration in Goldsmith's Letters from a Citizen of the World. The type was of course extremely common in England about the middle of the century, but the tone comes closer to

---

[1] Reprint of 1786 Edition, p. 27.
[2] p. 48. 42
[3] Ch. X "On the Marks of Literary Decay in England & France". Professor Earl A. Aldrich has also suggested The Spectator, No. 160 (Monday, Sept. 3, 1711) as a possible source for this.

Goldsmith than it does to Addison or any of the others who might have furnished the model. If we admit the probability of Freneau's knowledge of Goldsmith and his esteem for him as evidenced by the re-echoing of his opinions, we have a possible explanation of his rare use of blank verse. Goldsmith's violent expression of hostility to this form is well known.

Gray's "Elegy" may be sufficient basis for Freneau's mortuary verse, but it is probable that he also knew Young's "Night Thoughts", Blair's "Grave", or some other of the cruder effusions of the grave-yard school. At all events, his "House of Night" and several of his lesser works are filled with their weird trappings - spectres, screech-owls, howling winds, and all the rest. His melancholy tone, moreover, frequently goes beyond the pensive stage, coming much closer to their funeral air than it does to the relative lightness of "Il Penseroso".

Such in brief seem to be the outstanding threads of influence apparent in Freneau's early work. Upon a classical background was brought to bear the influence of the older English poets together with the stimulation of the Romantic precursors of the early and mid-eighteenth century. The tendencies imparted from these sources are most clearly evident in his first two editions. After 1788, with the single exception of the Burns influence already discussed,[1] not a

---

[1] p. 32.

single new impetus from England is to be found. Before his death the English Romantic Movement had burst into full flower, but so far as his poetry is concerned it apparently left him untouched. He had turned his mind to other things,- to religion, to social questions, above all to politics.

French Influence. In these interests he was no less the Romanticist than he had been in his earlier ventures in belles-lettres. His stimulus, however, came from a different source, this time from France. That he should turn his attention toward France was but natural. From 1780 to the close of the century French books and French philosophy were permeating America, and Freneau with his French blood and his Gallic temperament became a veritable worshipper of all things that came from that source.

The importance of Freneau's French ancestry may be easily overemphasized, but it is a factor that warrants some consideration. He came from a Huguenot family which for many generations had been inhabitants of La Rochelle. With the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 they had been forced to flee, and Freneau's grandfather Andié, after a period in which his residence is unknown, had come to America about 1705. It is safe to infer that the family traditions had not been entirely lost upon the grandson. Indeed we have practical assurance of this in an old Bible, still in the possession of one of Freneau's descendants, in which the

names of the family heads are preserved in unbroken sequence. These entries, moreover, almost to the end are in the French language. Memories of the tyranny which had been responsible for the break-up of the peaceful community life in La Rochelle may not be a wholly inconsiderable factor in Freneau's violent reaction against monarchy and all kinds of religious and social intolerance.

Whatever the cause behind it, his enthusiasm for the French Revolution knew no bounds. The edition of 1795 is filled with verses inspired by the subject; the "Ode to Liberty," "On the Anniversary of the Storming of the Bastille," "God Save the Rights of Man," "On the Demolition of the French Monarchy" are but a few. Often he waxes bitter, as when to the lines

> "Shall from their sheathes, ten thousand blades
> In glittering vengeance start
> To mow down slaves and slice off heads
> Taking a monarch's part?" -

he affixes a footnote with a pointed reference to "Mr. Edmund Burke's rant upon this subject."[1]

In his Letters on Various Interesting and Important Subjects,[2] which are in substance a series of arguments between a farmer and his pastor, he attempts to clear France of the charges of atheism then being leveled against her by

---

[1]Edition of 1795, p. 453.
[2]Philadelphia, 1799.

showing that she had a religion of her own. The tone is on the whole moderate, but behind a veil of respect he is rather hard on the clergy. He himself had espoused Unitarianism as early as 1786, for in that year he published in the Freeman's Journal a tribute to "The Honourable Emanuel Swedenborg's Universal Theology," which when reprinted in the 1788 edition was given the title "On a Book Called Unitarian Theology."[1] As poetry the piece is of no value, but in its reflection of the liberalizing tendency then appearing in religious thought it is extremely significant.

Probably the initial impetus in this respect had come to him from Rousseau, for much earlier than this he had given evidence of his adherence to doctrines definitely belonging to Rousseauism. In a set of verses entitled "Philosophical Reflections" published in 1786 and possibly written as early as 1780, we see this influence clearly. The whole selection would bear quoting, but the following lines are the most important.

> "Curs'd be the day, how bright soe'er it shin'd,
> That first made kings the masters of mankind;
> And curs'd the wretch who first with regal pride
> Their equal rights to equal man deny'd;
> But curs'd, o'er all, who first to slav'ry broke
> Submissive bow'd and own'd a monarch's yoke,
> Their servile souls his arrogance ador'd
> And basely own'd a brother for a lord;
> Hence wrath and blood and feuds and war began,
> And man turn'd monster to his fellow man.
> Not so that age of innocence and ease
> When men, yet social, knew no ills like these;

---

[1]Edition of 1788, p. 317.

> Then dormant yet, ambition (half unknown)
> No rival murder'd to possess a throne;
> No seas to guard, no empires to defend -
> Of some small tribe the father and the friend,
> The hoary sage beneath his sylvan shade
> Impos'd no laws but those which reason made."[1]

It would be difficult to find a more obvious statement of Rousseau's principles. The curse of mankind lies in the vicious social system that has debased him from his natural state. Let him look once more to the Golden Age and return to the law of Reason.

The ultimate source is unmistakable, and in all probability Freneau drew his ideas directly from Rousseau's own writings. That he had at hand at least one of the French radical's works we have definite evidence. In the poem entitled "St. Preux to Eloisa" the obvious source of its subject-matter is confirmed by a footnote, in which Freneau states that his material here is based on an incident "in J. J. Rousseau's letters".[2] This is the only direct reference to him that I have been able to find, but this is not surprising. Freneau had not the scholar's proclivity for citing authority; such a procedure indeed would have been wholly foreign to his principle.

---

[1]Reprint of 1786 Edition, p. 258.
[2]Edition of 1788, p. 159.

Other French writers undoubtedly had an influence upon him, although it is not easy to point out specific instances. When Beaumarchais' Eugénie was produced at Philadelphia in 1780, it is a noteworthy fact that Freneau wrote a prologue for it; and in 1783 he translated a work by a French army chaplain, the Abbé Robin, which was published under the title New Travels Through North America. But for the most part the influence that came to him from France was one of feeling rather than of form or subject. "He had taken a religion and not a literature from France, but in that religion he was an impassioned and heroic believer .... The forms remained Anglo-Saxon even when the spirit was thrilled with an ecstasy that came from France. ... French culture was a means of liberation, not a model to be copied."[1]

Contributions and Influence

It has been shown that Freneau's work possesses certain elements which more or less definitely link him with the Romantic Movement. Thus far he has been considered only as a product of that movement; it remains to consider what relation to it, if any, he bears as a contributor. It would seem prima facie that his chief and perhaps only importance

---

[1] Bernard Fay, The Revolutionary Spirit in France and America, p. 464.

in this respect must be in the American field. Yet, as the quotations from Tyler and Professor Pattee given at the beginning of this study indicate,[1] a wider range of influence by him has been suggested. To those "larger relations" which Tyler speaks of it is necessary to give some attention.

Contribution to English Romanticism. All the positive evidence which bears on the possibility of Freneau's having exerted an influence in England can be very briefly stated. It consists of

(1) Scott's appropriation in "Marmion" of a line from "Eutaw Springs", and a criticism of that poem which he is ~~obliged~~ alleged to have made.

(2) Campbell's appropriation in "O'Connor's Child" of a line from "The Indian Burying Ground."

(3) Anne Hunter's alleged plagiarism of "The Death Song of a Cherokee Indian."

(4) A mention of Freneau by the Scotch reviewer, Jeffrey.

Duyckinck was the first to observe Scott's and Campbell's apparent borrowing and he showed no hesitation in assuming plagiarism.[2] In the case of Scott his conclusion was somewhat

---

[1] Pp. 2, 3.

[2] Cyclopaedia of American Literature, p. 349. The credit for this discovery has been generally given to Tyler, but his work did not appear until twenty years later.

strengthened by an additional bit of evidence - "an anecdote which the late Henry Brevoort was accustomed to relate of his visit to Scott." This, he says, "affords assurance that the poet was really indebted to Freneau, and that he would not, on a proper occasion, have hesitated to acknowledge it. Mr. Brevoort was asked by Scott respecting the authorship of certain verses on the battle of Eutaw, which he had seen in a magazine, and had by heart, and which he knew were American. He was told that they were by Freneau, when he remarked, the poem is as fine a thing as there is of the kind in the language. Scott also praised one of the Indian poems."[1] Miss Marble believes that even on a basis of Scott's admitted knowledge of "Eutaw Springs" there is no ground for imputing plagiarism. "More probably," she says, "this was a case of coincidence or literary suggestion."[2] Far more remarkable cases of coincidence have certainly occurred, and it seems to me that her view is quite probably correct. In any event, the most that can be made of the evidence is that Scott read one or two of Freneau's poems and that one line made sufficient impression upon him to lead him consciously or unconsciously to appropriate it for his own use.

With regard to Campbell the evidence is even less definite. Obviously enough l. 56 of "O'Connor's Child" is identical with

---

[1] Cyclopaedia of American Literature, p. 349.
[2] Annie R. Marble, Heralds of American Literature, p. 75.

l. 36 of "The Indian Burying Ground", and the former was written at a later date than the latter. The theory of literary coincidence would apply here, however, just as well as in the case of Scott. Taken in its context Campbell's use of the line is perfectly natural.

> "Now on the grass-green turf he sits
> His tasselled horn beside him laid:
> Now o'er the hills in chase he flits,
> The hunter and the deer a shade!" (l. 53-56)

"Hunter" and "deer" are logical associations, "shade" was a favorite poetic word at the time, and it here forms a convenient rhyme with "laid". To insist on plagiarism seems to be stretching the point pretty far. Professor Pattee, nevertheless, upholds that view: "That Campbell read many of his [Frenèau's] poems we know, and that he even took from them at least one whole line, without acknowledging the theft, is all too evident."[1] No doubt he has evidence that warrants this assertion, but he fails to cite it and I have been unable to discover it from the available sources.

The problem in regard to "The Death Song" has already been discussed.[2] Mrs. Hunter evidently copied the piece from someone, for it was published in Carey's American Museum in 1787 and first appeared under her name in 1802. Whether Freneau actually wrote it for Carey or whether Carey borrowed it and

---

[1] Side-Lights on American Literature, p. 280.
[2] Pp. 41, 42.

attached Freneau's name to it is a question which we have no way of deciding. (The latter hypothesis is by no means inconsistent with the methods employed in conducting periodicals at that time.) Assuming, however, that Freneau did write the poem and that Anne Hunter borrowed it directly, we have nothing of any startling significance. Mrs. Hunter was a dilettante of no intrinsic importance, she exerted little influence on the literature of her time,[1] and the very fact that she did not hesitate to draw an entire poem from an American source is fairly good evidence that that particular source was not very well known in England.

For the mention by Jeffrey there is only the indirect testimony of John W. Francis. Describing an interview which he had with Freneau, he says, "I told him that I had heard Jeffrey, the Scotch Reviewer, say of his writings that the time would arrive when his poetry, like that of Hudibras, would command a commentator like Gray."[2] To take a second-hand statement of this sort as an expression of Jeffrey's actual criticism is hardly justifiable, and it is still less justifiable to make it a basis for assuming that Jeffrey had any extensive knowledge of Freneau's work. The only other contemporary British mention of him that I have been able to find is one pointed out in another connection by Dr. H.M. Ellis.

---

[1]Maria Edgeworth incorporated part of Mrs. Hunter's "Death Song" in Rosamond (Harper's Ed., p. 334).

Duyckinck, Cyclopaedia of American Literature, p. 348.

In Davis's Travels in The United States, 1798-1802 there occurs an estimate of the leading American writers of the day. The comment on Freneau is as follows: "Freneau has one good ode, 'Happy the Man who Safe on Shore!' But he is voluminous; and this ode may be likened to the grain in a bushel of chaff."[1]

More extended research might no doubt result in a discovery of other comments of this sort - either of the Jeffrey or the Davis variety. But I doubt if it can be definitely shown that there existed in England at that time anything more than a very casual acquaintance with Freneau's work. The first and only British edition of his poems was published in London by John Russell Smith in 1861. In the preface to this edition Smith makes the following significant statement.

"The influence of Freneau's wanderings and unsettled life is visible in his literary labours, a large part of which were inspired by the stirring events that were passing around him. For this reason perhaps he is not so well known as many other writers to the general reader, even in his own country; while the fierce hostility to England and King George which the great revolutionary struggle had raised in his mind, and which he expresses in very unmeasured language, prevented his being popular among Englishmen, who, indeed, have been generally neglectful of the literature of America."[2]

---

[1]Quoted by Ellis in Joseph Dennie and His Circle, p. 151.
[2]Poems on Various Subjects, Preface, xi.

There is every indication that Smith is here expressing the situation mildly. Freneau himself, as has already been pointed out, stated that Englishmen were entirely justified in treating American authors as inferiors.[1] Joseph Dennie in the Farmer's Museum of February 18, 1799 wrote: "Every man, unless tumid with the most ridiculous pride and confidence in American genius and literature, must be sensible from the newness of our country, from the deficiency of our seminaries, from the comparative paucity of books, and from the almost total want of patronage, that many literary articles can be furnished in perfection only from Europe.... The silly vanity of a self-complacent American may be wounded at this blunt, but notorious truth. Let him deny it if he can." And the above-mentioned Davis summed up his estimate of American literature with the succinct observation: "No snake exists in Ireland, and no poet can be found in America."[2]

This negative attitude of mind (added to the fact that there was no contemporary British edition of his works and that the American editions were decidedly limited) seems to preclude the possibility of Freneau having excited any widespread influence abroad. The whole idea of influence, moreover, here rests on the supposition that he had something new to add to English Romanticism. If he were merely re-echoing tendencies

---

[1] p. 49.
[2] Travels in the United States, 1798-1802, p. 137.

already apparent, the addition of his voice to the chorus could have little significance. And in the main this was all that he was doing. The only possible exception to this generalization lies in the sea ballads. He may possibly have had some influence in this respect upon Campbell, but so far as I can discover there is no evidence of any actual connection.

At the time when Tyler advanced his hypothesis in regard to Freneau's "larger relations" the prevailing view seems to have been that English Romanticism made its first appearance with the Lyrical Ballads in 1798. If this had been true some of Freneau's earlier work might well have appeared extraordinary. But present knowledge of the origins of the Romantic Movement put an entirely different light on the matter. How the enthusiastic implications of some of the more recent critics are to be explained is a mystery. Perhaps an observation made in another connection by William Lyon Phelps may not be entirely beside the point here. "Love," he says, "is blind; love of country stone-blind."[1]

Influence in America. On the whole, very little has been said concerning Freneau's influence in the field of American letters. His possible connections with Poe have, however, been suggested by two or three writers. Mr. Paul

---

[1]The Advance of the English Novel, p. 124.

Elmer More, for example, observes that "Freneau's chief affiliations in the future are undoubtedly with Poe. No one could overlook that quality in such a poem as "The House of Night; it is no less unmistakable in separate verses and stanzas scattered throughout his works."[1] There is obviously a resemblance in some of the work of the two men, and on purely a priori grounds it would not seem unreasonable to suppose that a direct line of influence might be found.

Investigation, however, fails to disclose any such influence. An exhaustive study of the nature of Poe's reading made by Mr. Killis Campbell throws considerable light on the problem. Mr. Campbell's results show indeed that Poe was acquainted with Freneau, for he quotes him once and mentions him four times. But these five references when placed beside the other tabulations appear altogether insignificant. Poe, for example, wrote three articles on Bryant, quoting 35 of his poems and mentioning him in 18 other connections. "Of the American poets, it seems fairly certain that he knew best Bryant and Longfellow and Willis."[2] The references to these three men, however, are relatively few when compared with his references to Byron, Coleridge, Moore, Tennyson, Wordsworth, Hazlitt, Lamb, Leigh Hunt, Dickens, Disraeli, Milton, and

---

1. Shelburne Essays: Fifth Series, p. 97.
2. "Poes Reading" in University of Texas Studies in English, No. 5, p. 176.

Shakespeare. If a final indication were necessary that the five references to Freneau signify little, it might be pointed out that Poe mentions Barlow twice and Trumbull seven times. Disregarding these comparative figures, there is still little reason for assuming that Poe's knowledge of Freneau indicates any line of influence. The picturesque quality in Poe is not to be explained primarily by his copying the tendencies of any other man; it can be adequately explained by his own personality. The methods of the psycho-analyst are here likely to be more productive of results than are the ordinary methods of the literary historian or critic. It takes no psychologist, however, to see that "The House of Night" and such a work as "Ulalume", despite superficial similarities, are totally different and proceed from totally different springs of inspiration.

The only other American poet of any importance whose name has been linked with Freneau is Bryant. Mr. Edward F. De Lancey has pointed out a certain parallelism in the literary careers of the two men, and has rather strongly suggested the possibility of a connection between them.[1] Of such a connection, however, I can find no evidence,- while the evidence which points in the opposite direction is abundant. Bryant has left a fairly complete autobiographical account of

---

[1] Philip Freneau, the Patriot-Poet of the Revolution. Quoted in Austin, Philip Freneau, p. 225.

his early years, in which he enumerated the various influences operating upon him at that time.[1] When we learn from this that he had read Blair's "Grave" and Porteus's "Death" as well as some of Southey's earlier work, there is no reason for supposing that Freneau's mortuary verse in any way entered into the production of "Thanatopsis". And when we have Bryant's own testimony of his enthusiasm over the Lyrical Ballads, it seems nothing short of foolish to look to Freneau's nature poems as a background for such a work as "The Yellow Violet".

Bryant's literary background, like that of Freneau, is to be found on the other side of the Atlantic. Any parallelism that exists in their work is amply explained by the fact that they were to a large extent products of the same tendencies. There is no reason for postulating a causal relationship between them; the key to their apparent relationship lies in the sources common to both.

This is equally true of the men who came after Bryant. In the days of the New England Renaissance, as earlier, American culture was dominantly European, and so far as literary models were concerned it was almost exclusively English. That Freneau exerted even the slightest direct influence upon any of the more important figures in American literature is therefore highly improbable. There is no evidence even so tenable as that bearing on Campbell and Scott. Indirectly, however,

---

[1]Parke Godwin, Life of Wm. Cullen Bryant, Ch. 1.

through his political and social philosophy I believe that he has a rather distinct importance.

"The first stage in the romanticization of American thought resulted from the naturalization of French revolutionary theory .... Landing first in Virginia in the early seventeen-seventies, it met with a hospitable reception from the generous planter society and spread widely there the fashion of Physiocratic agrarianism .... Eventually reaching New England, the last haven and refuge of eighteenth-century realism, it disarmed Yankee antagonism by assuming the dress of Unitarianism and preached the doctrine of human perfectibility with such conviction as to arouse the conscience of New England to an extraordinary enthusiasm for reforming man and society .... No other philosophy assumed so many and such attractive disguises, or wrought such changes in American ideals, as this French romanticism with its genuine humanitarian impulses."[1]

In the dissemination of this philosophy Freneau was no small factor. His enthusiasm for France and his adherence to the fundamental principles of Rousseauism have already been noted,[2] and in the expression of these principles he was a leader both in point of time and by virtue of his literary powers. Thus in a preface to "The Beauties of Santa

---

[1]Vernon Louis Parrington, The Romantic Revolution in America, p. vi-vii.

[2]Pp. 56-61.

Cruz", first published in The United States Magazine (1780), he showed himself one of the earliest outspoken opponents of negro slavery. On this occasion his tone was mild, but at other times he showed far more warmth. For example, in a piece on "Belief and Unbelief", published in the edition of 1815, he struck vigorously at dogmatism in religion, and not satisfied with the verse alone he placed above it the satirical caption: "Humbly Recommended to the Serious Consideration of Creed Makers."[1] His feelings were given their most violent expression, however, in the papers comprising the National Gazette. Here his bitterness called down upon his head the wrath of Washington and the conservatives in general. This episode is of marked significance; it not only reveals the temper of the man, his worship of liberal principles, and his genius for pungent prose, but it also indicates the amount of attention he was receiving and the consequent influence on public opinion.[2]

Clearly Freneau was not the only literary man of his time instrumental in the shaping of liberal thought. Hugh Brackenridge and Joel Barlow were also leaders in the dissemination and defense of French revolutionary doctrine, while Brockden Brown, with his romantic philosophy inherited from

---

[1]Edition of 1815, Vol. I, p. 119.

[2]The episode is thoroughly treated from a political viewpoint by Dr. S. E. Forman, The Political Activities of Philip Freneau.

William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, was making his influence felt through the vehicle of the novel. Scores of lesser lights were following their example, and "throughout the magazines and newspapers [from 1780 on], one finds numerous translations and adaptations from French novels concerning the poor black slaves, the virtues of the Swiss, and the life of the French peasants."[1] By 1800 the results of all this were beginning to be unmistakably apparent. "A tempering of too bleak a morality, an easing of social and political bonds, a moderate sentimentality, and, on the whole, a tendency to rely on men and instincts rather than on governments - these are the characteristics that we find."[2]

The importance of these factors in the background of American literary Romanticism is unquestioned. In so far as Freneau contributed to the growth of these factors he contributed to the growth of the Romantic Movement. Unlike his contemporary Paine, with whom he was closely akin in spirit, he probably has little or no significance outside of the American field; but in that limited field I think he is worthy of more attention than he has generally received.

---

[1]Bernard Faÿ, The Revolutionary Spirit in France and America, p. 342.

[2]Ibid., p. 131.

Summary

An analysis of Freneau's work reveals the presence of certain of the more fundamental romantic tendencies. A subjective attitude, a love of the picturesque, and a spirit of revolt are characteristics of considerable prominence. The latter quality, indeed, underlies the whole temper of his character. He was not merely "the poet of the Revolution" as he has come to be generally known; he was a poet of Revolution, revolting against the political, theological, social, and literary conservatisms of his day.

His reaction in the field of literature was, it must be admitted, probably the least pronounced of all. At times he followed the classical convention pretty closely, but in such a work as "The House of Night" and in the most of his nature poems he aligned himself with a new tendency. This is equally apparent in his poems dealing with sea subjects and with the American Indian. From the standpoint of form even more than from that of content, he broke with neo-classicism. He used the heroic couplet (except in his early satires) very rarely, and he experimented not altogether unsuccessfully with many of the freer forms that were to be more generally employed by those who came after him. Sometimes in subject, often in form, always in spirit, he belonged to the Romantic School.

From a causal viewpoint his connections with that school are clear. He was at once a product and a part of the tendencies which made up the undercurrent of eighteenth-century literature. Following ~~is~~ the example of Warton, Gray, and the other romantic precursors, he went back to Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton for his sources of inspiration; at the same time drawing from those later writers much of their characteristic imagery and coloring. His forms were always English, but in his later work there also appeared a strong French influence. His philosophy was largely shaped by Rousseau, and the French Revolution imparted to his poetry a new stimulus, both intellectual and emotional. In his adaptation and combination of these various tendencies he shows a greater comprehensiveness than almost any men of the Romantic Revival before Wordsworth and Coleridge. Yet from the standpoint of intrinsic merit he must be classed with the precursors of twenty-five to forty years earlier. Partly due to a scattering of his energies, partly to a repressive poetic environment, partly to his own lack of genius, he never reached the heights of Parnassus which he set out to climb.

As a contributing factor to English Romanticism in its wider sense Freneau is, I am convinced, wholly negligible. Not only had he little or nothing new to add to what was already existant, but conditions were such as to almost definitely preclude any transfer of influence which some of his admirers

have advanced are based on extremely tenuous evidence, and seem rather to be instances of over-patriotic zeal than of sound criticism.

In America Freneau occupies a far more significant place. Yet his direct influence here was probably much less than might be predicted from the character of his work. He was the first Romantic poet in America, but he did not initiate a school of Romantic poetry. When such a school finally appeared it was based on models taken directly from Europe. The way for this literary development was prepared, however, by a romanticization of American thought that was rapidly taking place during the closing decades of the eighteenth century. In this movement Freneau played a prominent role. Partly through the example set by his verse, probably more through the influence of his political, social, religious, and philosophical ideas he contributed to the growth of that spirit which formed the basis of nineteenth-century literature.

Bibliography

Freneau: Works

The following list is complete so far as the collective editions are concerned. For a list including pamphlets and broadsides see Victor H. Paltsits, A Bibliography of the Separate and Collected Works of Philip Freneau. The arrange- is chronological.

Poems. Written chiefly during the late War.
Philadelphia: F. Bailey, 1786.

The Miscellaneous Works of Mr. Philip Freneau.
Containing his essays and additional poems.
Philadelphia: F. Bailey, 1788.

Poems. New edition revised, corrected [and augmented]
by the author. Monmouth, N. J., 1795.

Letters on Various Interesting and Important Subjects.
Many of which have appeared in the Aurora.
By Robert Slender, O. S. M. [pseud.]
Philadelphia: D. Hogan, 1799.

Poems Written and Published during the American Revolutionary War. Interspersed with translations from the ancients and other pieces not heretofore in print.
Philadelphia, 1809.

A Collection of Poems on American Affairs. And a Variety of other Subjects chiefly Moral and Political; Written between the year 1797 and the present time.
N. Y.: D. Longworth, 1815.

Poems on Various Subjects. Reprint of Edition of 1786.
London: J. R. Smith, 1861.

Poems Relating to the American Revolution. Edited by
E. A. Duyckinck. N.Y.: W. J. Widdleton, 1865.

Poems of Philip Freneau, Poet of the American Revolution.
Edited for the Princeton Historical Association by
Fred Lewis Pattee. 3 vol.
Princeton: The Univ. Library, 1902.

Freneau: Biography and Criticism

Austin, Mary S., Philip Freneau, the Poet of the Revolution. N. Y.: A. Wessels Co., 1901.

Cairns, William B., A History of American Literature. N. Y.: Oxford University Press (Am. Branch), 1921. pp. 140-145.

Cambridge History of American Literature. N. Y.: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1917. Vol. I, pp. 180-183.

De Lancey, Edward F., Philip Freneau, the Huguenot Patriot-Poet of the Revolution. Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of America, Vol. II, No. 2, 1891.

Duyckinck, Evert A. and George L., Cyclopaedia of American Literature. Edited by M. Laird Simons. Phila.: Wm. Rutter & Co., 1877. Vol. I, pp. 341-362.

Forman, S. E., The Political Activities of Philip Freneau. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Studies in Historical and Political Science. Series XX, No. 9-10, 1902.

Marble, Annie R., Heralds of American Literature. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1907. pp. 61-104.

More, Paul Elmer, Shelburne Essays: Fifth Series. N. Y.: Putnam's, 1908. pp. 86-105.

Paltsits, Victor H., A Bibliography of the Separate and Collected Works of Philip Freneau. N.Y.: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1903.

Parrington, Vernon L., The Colonial Mind 1620-1800. N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1927. pp. 368-381.

Pattee, Fred Lewis, Side-Lights on American Literature. N.Y.: Century Co., 1922. Chap. on "The Modernness of Philip Freneau".

Tyler, Moses Coit, The Literary History of the American Revolution. N.Y.: Putnam's, 1897. Vol. I, pp. 171-183, 413-425; II, 246-276.

Wendell, Barrett, A Literary History of America. N.Y: Scribner's, 1901. pp. 130-134.

The Romantic Movement

Ayer, C. W., The Growth of the English Romantic Movement During the Eighteenth Century.
Ohio Modern Language Association, 1893.

Babbitt, Irving, Rousseau and Romanticism.
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1919.

Beers, Henry A., A History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century.
N.Y.: Henry Holt & Co., 1899.

Campbell, Killis, Poe's Reading. Univ. of Texas Studies in English, No. 5, 1925.

Ellis, H. M., Joseph Dennie and His Circle: A Study in American Literature from 1792 to 1812.
Univ. of Texas Studies in English, 1915.

Faÿ, Bernard, L'Esprit Revolutionaire en France et aux Etats-Unis à la Fin du 18e Siècle, 1925.
Trans. by Ramon Guthrie, The Revolutionary Spirit in France and America.
N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1927.

Goodwin, Parke, Life and Works of William Cullen Bryant.
N.Y.: Appleton & Co., 1883. Vol. I.

Millar, J. H., The Mid-Eighteenth Century.
Edinburgh & London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1902.

Parrington, Vernon L., The Romantic Revolution in America.
N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1927.

Patterson, J. E., The Sea's Anthology.
N.Y.: George H. Doran Co., 1913.

Phelps, William Lyons, The Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement. Boston: Ginn & Co., 1893.

Reynolds, Myra, The Treatment of Nature in English Poetry between Pope and Wordsworth. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1896.

Symons, Arthur, The Romantic Movement in English Poetry.
N.Y.: Dutton, 1909.

Vaughan, Charles Edwyn, The Romantic Revolt.
Edinburgh & London: Wm. Blackwood & Sons, 1907.

Woods, George Benjamin, English Poetry and Prose of the Romantic Movement.
Chicago: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1916.

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
1 1719 02487 0711

NOT TO BE TAKEN
FROM THE LIBRARY